RECOVERY TOOLBOX

COLOPHON

This toolbox is a resource designed to support care professionals in reducing the stigma surrounding mental health vulnerability.

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OVERVIEW TABLE

The table below provides an overview of the activities in the toolbox, including theme, duration, and suitable group size.

Activity	Theme	Duration	Participants
Circle of Trust	Sharing Experiences	70–130 min	8–20 people
Movie Time	Connection & Trust	140–280 min	3–15 people
Ship of Theseus	Shared Decision-Making	100–180 min	5–7 people

CONCEPT

Recovery-oriented care starts from the belief that support only becomes truly meaningful when people with different perspectives are given the opportunity to help shape the process together. When care professionals, experts by experience, and service users meet one another as equals, space is created for deeper connection, mutual understanding, and shared decision-making.

It is from this perspective that this set of activities was developed. The collection contains methods that can be used without extensive training and that are designed to encourage equality, recognition, and dialogue. Each activity is built around a recovery-related theme and can be used in a range of settings, such as group sessions, individual support, team meetings, or workshops.

What all of these methods share is their inviting character and their focus on recovery. They make clear that every experience matters, and that meaningful support grows when people are given the chance to think, feel, and build together.

METHODOLOGY

Each method in this collection is based on existing frameworks, concepts, or practice-based experience. Below, each activity is explained in terms of the theoretical and practical sources used in its development.

Circle of Trust is based on the methodology of *Dr Peggy McIntosh (1989),* which focuses on making shared vulnerability visible. Through a physically participatory format, participants learn that they are not alone in their experiences.

Movie Time combines *James A. Russell's Circumplex Model of Affect* with the principles of film therapy. The intensity scale makes it possible to identify the

emotional range of the selected film both before and after the session. Organisations such as *Overstap vzw* have practical experience in using film within care settings.

Ship of Theseus takes a philosophical approach to identity. Based on the classical work of *Plutarch* and the *Johari Window by Luft & Ingham*, participants are invited to reflect on who they are, how they see themselves, and how others see them. This method is inspired by sources from philosophy and models of self-reflection.

The selected sources and models ensure that each activity is grounded in a solid conceptual foundation and remains relevant within recovery-oriented and participatory practice.

USER GUIDE

No specific training is required to use these activities. What is required, however, is a basic attitude of openness and respect. The activities are intended as a practical tool for anyone who wants to work in a recovery-oriented way, in a variety of contexts and with different groups: service users, experts by experience, family members, staff, or volunteers.

Each activity invites participants into encounter, reflection, and shared experience. It is important to consider the purpose of the session beforehand: do you want to encourage people to get to know one another, strengthen connection within the group, make vulnerability discussable, or work towards a shared decision? Based on that goal, you can choose a suitable activity from the toolbox. Read the activity carefully and consider what it asks of participants in terms of involvement, energy, or comfort.

When preparing, make sure the space is suitable. Think about what the activity requires: writing or drawing materials, conversation cards, a clock or timer, or something to help create a warm atmosphere. If appropriate to the setting, you may also wish to provide something to drink or a small snack.

Some methods invite people to talk, while others focus more on doing or experiencing. Follow the step-by-step format, but leave room for flexibility. As facilitator, your role is to create the conditions, keep an eye on the pace, and ensure that everyone feels safe. Check in from time to time to see whether the pace still feels right, whether a break is needed, and stay alert to signs of overload or withdrawal.

After the activity, it is important to make space for reflection. Use the accompanying reflection questions, or invite participants to process their experience creatively. This might include drawing, writing, or sharing a metaphor. Whatever is shared should be received respectfully, either in silence or with a simple acknowledgement.

INVENTORY

The activity toolkit contains:

- 3 method cards divided into three thematic sections: Connection & Trust, Sharing Experiences, and Shared Decision-Making.
- A concise guide with tips for facilitating sessions and providing appropriate follow-up care.
- An intensity scale (Movie Time).

LISTENING & CONVERSATION TIPS

Listening may well be the most powerful act within recovery-oriented work. In an environment where people show vulnerability, whether willingly or hesitantly, listening without judgement is an act of recognition. It creates space for recovery, even without words of comfort or advice.

A good facilitator or conversation partner remains open, not in order to understand with the mind alone, but to sense with the heart. This requires an attitude of curiosity, slowness, and respect. Let people finish speaking. Even

after their final word, wait a moment before responding; sometimes the real story only emerges after the silence. Do not interrupt with solutions, explanations, or your own experiences. Sometimes the greatest support is simply this: staying present, continuing to listen, and remaining there with the other person.

Ask questions that open things up rather than close them down. Questions that begin with “What...”, “How...”, or “Where...” help to explore someone’s experience. Avoid “why” questions, as these can easily feel judgemental or overly analytical. A question such as “What gave you strength in that moment?” invites self-reflection without pressure. And if someone falls silent or does not want to speak, let that happen too. Not every silence needs to be filled.

Silences are allowed and necessary. They are not emptiness, but space. Space to feel, to breathe, to process. It can help to say at the beginning of the conversation that silence is welcome. Also offer alternatives for those who do not want, or are not able, to express themselves in words: drawing, choosing a symbol, pointing to something, or even making a small movement. Recovery has many languages.

Finally, be aware of your own responses. A nod, a smile, or simply saying “thank you” is often enough. Avoid interpretations or advice unless they are explicitly asked for. In this work, presence matters more than analysis.

SOURCES		
Activity	**Theoretical Framework**	**Source**
Movie Time	- Circumplex Model of Affect (intensity scale) - Film therapy methodology	- James A. Russell (1980) - Overstap vzw
Ship of Theseus	- Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* (biography of Theseus) - Johari Window	- *Essential Knowledge Philosophy* (2022) - Philosophy of identity, Luft & Ingham (1955)
Circle of Trust	- Dr. Peggy McIntosh’s circle methodology	- McIntosh (1989)

CONTACT DETAILS

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